

In the Claims

Please amend claims 19, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 36, and 37, as follows:

B1  
19. (Amended) An inner tightening mechanism adapted to equip an article of footwear having a flexible or semi-rigid upper mounted on a sole, said tightening mechanism comprising:  
a retention band connected to the inner surface of the upper by at least two anchoring points fixed on lateral and medial sides, respectively, of the upper, at least a portion of said retention band partially surrounding a foot of a wearer of the article of footwear in a flexion fold area and extending from said flexion fold area in a direction toward a heel of the foot.

B2  
24. (Amended) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein a second portion of the retention band, which is comprised between a sliding return and an end of the retention band, includes a fixing device capable of maintaining tension in the tightening mechanism.

B3  
27. (Amended) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein the inner surface of the upper includes a fixing device that is complementary to the fixing device of the second portion of the retention band.

28. (Amended) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 24, wherein said fixing device is a self-gripping type.

B3 29. (Amended) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot, and wherein the retention band includes a gripping device that is arranged on said portion and which enables the loosening of the inner tightening mechanism.

30. (Amended) An inner tightening mechanism according to claim 19, wherein the article of footwear is equipped with an inner shoe which includes at least two raised elements that are fixed on the lateral side and on the medial side, respectively, of the inner shoe, and wherein the retention band is supported on the raising elements.

36. (Amended) An article of footwear comprising:

a sole;

an upper mounted on said sole, said upper having a lateral side, a medial side, and an inner surface;

B4 an inner tightening mechanism for retention of a foot in position within said article of footwear, said inner tightening mechanism comprising:

a retention band fixed with respect to said inner surface of said upper at at least two anchoring points, a first of said anchoring points being on said lateral side of said upper and a second of said anchoring points being on said medial side of said upper, at least a portion of said retention band at least partially surrounding a foot of a wearer of the boot in a flexion fold area and extending in a direction toward a heel of the foot.

B4 37. (Amended) An article of footwear according to claim 36, further comprising an inner shoe, said inner shoe including at least two raised elements, a first of said raised elements being fixed on a lateral side of said inner shoe and a second of said raised elements being fixed on a medial side of said inner shoe, said retention band taking support on said raised elements.

Please add new claims 38-64, as follows:

-- 38. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said upper is flexible or semi-rigid.

B5 39. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said upper is non-rigid.

40. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein each of said lateral and medial sides of said upper includes a respective portion having a tensioned position and a non-tensioned position, said tensioned positions of said lateral and medial sides of said upper being inward toward the foot of the wearer relative to said non-tensioned positions of said lateral and medial sides of said upper.

41. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said inner tightening mechanism further comprises a sliding return, wherein said retention band further comprises an end and a second portion, said second portion of said retention band extending between said sliding return and said end of said retention band, said inner tightening mechanism further comprising a fixing device carried by said second portion of said retention band for maintaining tensioning in said inner tightening mechanism.

42. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 41, wherein said article of footwear further comprises an inner shoe having an upper, wherein said fixing device carried by said second portion of said retention band constitutes a first fixing device, and wherein said upper of said inner shoe includes a second fixing device complementary to said first fixing device.

43. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 41, wherein one of said anchoring points includes a sliding return, and the retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in the sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot, and wherein the portion of the retention band includes an attachment mechanism means that is complementary to the previously cited attachment mechanism.

44. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 41, wherein the inner surface of the upper includes a fixing device that is complementary to the fixing device of the second portion of the retention band.

45. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 41, wherein said fixing device is a self-gripping type.

46. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein at least one of said anchoring points is spaced above said sole.

47. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein both of said two anchoring points are spaced above said sole.

48. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 43, wherein at least one of said two anchoring points is positioned substantially along a central portion of a line connecting a base of the heel of the wearer to the flexion fold of the foot of the wearer.

49. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein one of said two anchoring points includes a sliding return, and wherein said retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in said sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot of the wearer.

50. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 49, wherein said one of said two anchoring points which includes said sliding return is positioned on said medial side of said upper.

51. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 49, wherein said upper includes a housing on said inner surface, in an area where said sliding return is located.

52. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein said retention band includes a fork comprising two arms, one of said arms integrating one of said anchoring points, and wherein a second of said arms is fixed on an inner surface of said upper by a complementary anchoring point positioned on the same side of the upper as said first anchoring point.

53. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 52, wherein one of said arms of said fork is positioned substantially along a primary direction passing through a base of the heel and through the flexion fold of the foot of the wearer, and wherein another of said arms also passes through the flexion fold of the foot of the wearer but along a secondary direction, said secondary direction being inclined along a horizontal plane less than said primary direction.

54. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 53, wherein said arms of said fork are fixed to said medial side of said upper.

55. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein one of said two anchoring points includes a sliding return, wherein said retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in said sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot of the wearer, and wherein said retention band includes a gripping device arranged on said portion of said retention band, said gripping device enabling loosening of said inner tightening mechanism.

56. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 36, wherein one of said two anchoring points includes a sliding return, wherein said retention band, which is fixed at an end to a second of said anchoring points, passes in said sliding return by defining a portion which covers the foot of the wearer, and wherein said inner tightening mechanism further includes at least one distribution plate fixed in an area of said portion of said retention band, beneath said portion of said retention band.

57. (New) An article of footwear comprising:

a sole;

an upper mounted on said sole, said upper having an inner surface and two sides, said two sides being constituted by a lateral side and a medial side;

a tightening mechanism for retention of a foot of a wearer in position within said article of footwear by means of said tightening mechanism applying at least a downwardly directed force upon the foot toward said sole and sidewardly directed forces upon the foot at said lateral and medial sides of said upper, said tightening mechanism comprising:

a retention band including a portion fixed with respect to said inner surface of said upper at an anchoring point at one of said two sides of said upper, said portion of said retention band extending from said anchoring point, across a top of the foot of a wearer, to a second of said two sides of said upper, said portion of said retention band being positioned along a plane extending substantially through a flexion fold area of the foot of a wearer, through said anchoring point, and through a heel of the foot of a wearer.

58. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 57, further comprising an inner boot positioned beneath said upper and beneath said tightening mechanism.

59. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 57, wherein said upper is flexible.

60. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 57, wherein each of said lateral and medial sides of said upper includes a respective portion having a tensioned position and a non-

tensioned position, said tensioned positions of said lateral and medial sides of said upper being inward toward the foot of the wearer relative to said non-tensioned positions of said lateral and medial sides of said upper.

61. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 57, wherein said tightening mechanism further comprises a sliding return, said sliding return fixed to said inner surface of said upper at a second of said two sides of said upper at a second anchoring point, and wherein said retention band passes in said sliding return and extends upwardly from said sliding return to thereby provide access to said retention band to have said downwardly and sidewardly directed forces applied.

62. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 61, wherein at least one of said anchoring points is spaced above said sole.

63. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 61, wherein both of said anchoring points are spaced above said sole.

64. (New) An article of footwear according to claim 61, wherein both of said anchoring points are positioned substantially at a center of a line connecting a base of the heel of the wearer to the flexion fold of the foot of the wearer. --